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Veishea: An Attack and A Defense

Anonymous*

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Abstract

In Earle D. Ross' *A History of the Iowa State College* there is, on page 245, a paragraph- one simple paragraph- concerning Veishea...

VEISHEA: An A

the attack:

**veishea . . . has the college students
wonderfully duped . . . is a vulgar
display of college publicity . . . makes
isc unique — so what? . . . yearly se-
duces a crop of high schoolers to
come to isc . . .**

IN EARLE D. ROSS' *A History of the Iowa State College* there is, on page 345, a paragraph — one simple paragraph — concerning Veishea. The paragraph explains when and why Veishea was born, then proceeds to carve out a supreme figure in the sculpture of understatement: the paragraph says Veishea with its varied sports, exhibits, entertainments was "to become increasingly attractive."

Nobody can deny this; probably Veishea is as fine an example of localized mass-hypnosis as can normally be seen kicking around the US — at least in the realm of making a celebration look 'attractive.'

If you ask a student his opinion of Veishea an average first reaction will be a grope for his last year's Veishea-wearied back combined with some form of verbalized anguish. But then the student will quickly regain his normal state, repressively crowd last spring's memories into a seldom used brain cranny, and say that although Veishea is a lot of work he

[ATTACK—Continued on page 19]

ick and A Defense

the defense.

**veishea . . . earnings help beautify
the campus . . . is an effective form
of college publicity . . . unifies the
student body . . . provides valuable
administrative experience . . . profits
ames businessmen . . .**

IF COLLEGE JOE, Iowa State variety, were to ask his friend, "Should we do away with Veishea, Bud?" his friend would be either surprised or mildly amused. "Veishea," Bud would answer after a minute's deliberation, "is a good deal."

Yes, Veishea is a good deal, a fact which is quite evident to anybody who knows anything at all about the festival. Some people, unfortunately, like Veishea simply because the college doesn't have classes then and they get a vacation. More, however, like it for more unselfish reasons; reasons which are important and evident.

Though not by a long shot the most important, perhaps the most beneficial effect is one that most people probably are not aware of. Money donated by Veishea has financed the building of the fountain in front of the Union and the statue group around the little pool in back of the Home Ec. Building. Although not primarily a money-making endeavor, Veishea has, since its beginning in 1922, made money. It has donated to the college for beautifying the campus.

Probably the most important good effect of Veishea is that it publicizes the college. An inestimable amount of free publicity for the school has gone out to residents of Iowa and the whole nation (for Veishea is the greatest student managed undertaking of any kind in the country and probably the world). This free publicity takes the form of newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and television programs.

This year WOI-TV will broadcast the Veishea parade at an hour of the day when 250,- to 300,000 people are generally watching. For the parade the number of viewers is expected to be substantially above this figure. The CBS national radio network is going to broadcast Ray Anthony, here for the Veishea dances, from coast to coast.

Veishea does the college good right here at home, too. Students from every part of the campus, from every department, from every major field, from every dorm, fraternity, sorority, from departmental clubs, from most student organizations, work on Veishea. All these people from different segments of Iowa State life band together and work side by side to help make Veishea go. Thus, Veishea acts as a great unifying agent on campus. More people have an active part in Veishea than any other campus activity, including our biggest football and basketball games. No other campus activity can claim to have such an assemblage of workers, or such widespread support.

Not everybody can have administrative positions on Veishea, but for those that do, much leadership and executive training is obtained. There is a job for almost every interest and for almost every type of person. Freshmen usually start out in the lesser positions and, by the time they're sophomores, many have executive jobs involving conducting meetings and leading other people. Juniors hold down more difficult jobs, and seniors may secure positions on Central Committee or even the general chairmanship. Training in a large number of fields is to be had here, much of which can be used after graduation. Handling of funds, publicity and public relations, administration in numerous fields of activity, public speaking, meeting important people are done, all by students.

Finally, Veishea is no small benefit to Ames businessmen.

Thousands of people from all over the state and surrounding country come to see Veishea each year. While they are here, their patronage goes to Campustown and Big-Ames merchants.

Yes, the typical student here would indeed be surprised if someone were to ask him, "Should we abolish Veishea?" A more typical question for College Joe to ask Bud is "What are you doing for Veishea this year?"



[ATTACK—continued from page 16]

probably wouldn't like to see it abandoned. He isn't sure why — he just feels he wouldn't want it to go.

Now this certainly reveals the spirit which keeps Veishea going, has kept it and probably will keep it being produced, staged or whatever Veishea is-*ed* each spring.,

Namely, blindness.

That is, the whole idea behind Veishea is thought-out for a student, and whatever shred of question or disbelief which may twitch at his mind will be crushed during the school year. In the fall there is the blaring plead for help by already nervous committee chairmen (when a frosh a student probably will be asked to work in a "peon" job — along with the other hundreds of this hard-working and un-recognized species). Then follow the publicity men who use every sort of medium — newspapers to balloons — to keep Veishea before the students' eyes. Then come the coupon sales campaigns — behind the disguise of pretty girls and promises of "look at the money you save." Finally shrieks the final blast: Veishea-ometers, wordy revealings of the Veishea orchestra and perhaps a good would-be battle for extra-late hours for the coeds.

Then, midst thunder of rockets and banshee of parade, issues forth Veishea itself.

Who can escape?

* * *

Let's take a look at Veishea — the "why" of it instead of the "what."

Back in its beginning in the spring of 1922 it was a celebration which combined the fetes of three divisions into "one grand institutional activity." Now, of course, Veishea

is not that, but according to the students themselves, it is a real peachy regularized publicity stunt for the college — and it comes all conveniently packaged in a three-day parcel each spring.

This raises the question why does ISC need to be so unique? The remainder of the US's several hundred colleges and universities get along fine — and how many have a time-consuming, work-producing orgy like Veishea to put themselves before the public?

Also, there is at the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts an Information Service which has the duty of sending out news releases concerning the college's activities. There have been no reports of the Information Service not successfully doing its job.

The college Extension Service reaches throughout the state, by means of personal contact and printed bulletin, helping do the job of keeping harmony between college and the supporting hinterland.

Of course there are the students themselves: 8,000 of them, who, between study, fan out over Iowa and the United States supposedly mouthing the laudits of good ole ISC. If they don't there's no use for any other less effective form of communication.

Some may say that Veishea is fine for alums who want to drop in, get another glance of the places where they spent their undergrad days. A one day celebration in the fall — it's usually called "Homecoming" — suffices for other colleges. What alum wants to come back to ISC for a three day stay anyway? He probably had his fill of Veishea-izing when he was going to school.

There is, of course, the argument that high school students — prospective ISC students — get a fine look at the college by taking in Veishea of a spring. Doesn't it seem a trifle underhanded and hypocritical for a college, an American institution professing to be the forming-ground for the country's top citizens, to seduce students with a three-day extravanza of dances, sport events, exhibits and parades? Everything but the evidence of study and solemn preparation for life each student is asked to pen onto an application blank.

If we must have our spring festival let's have it last only one day and out on a beautiful huge open countryside (un-

marred by pylon, Veishea-ometer or balloon) where students and faculty could enjoy a quiet, undisturbed tea (less ridiculous?) and exclaim how nice it is to not have to go to class, teach class, or skip class because of Veishea preparations.

Everyone would be in fine condition the very next day, and there wouldn't be a person — committee chairman or "peon" — who'd have to worry about next year's celebration.



Portrait of an old man

Age, the eager chisel of the Sculptor,
Hollows out the face,
Sharpens the edges,
Puckers the left-over substance.
Disease, the universal flux,
Welds the joints,
Corrodes the flesh,
Chokes the blood from the limbs.
Pain, the master torturer,
Warpes the body,
Drugs the movements,
Mocks the life.
The eyes, age and pain immune,
Alone remain untouched —
Two live coals in a cooling cinder.

